



Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • P.O. Box 25486 • Denver Federal Center • Denver, Colorado 80225 • www.r6.fws.gov/coloradoriver

The Colorado pikeminnow, razorback sucker, humpback chub and bonytail are endangered fish species that once thrived in the Colorado River system. Dam installation and the introduction of nonnative fish changed the river environment and put these fish at risk. Established in 1988, the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program is a partnership of public and private organizations working to recover these endangered species while allowing continued and future water development.

Partners

Colorado River Energy Distributors Assoc.
Colorado Water Congress
Environmental Defense
National Park Service
The Nature Conservancy
States of Colorado, Utah and Wyoming

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Utah Water Users Association
Western Area Power Administration
Wyoming Water Association

Program Elements

- \$ **Habitat Management B** Identifying and acquiring instream flows, changing Federal dam operations, and operating other reservoirs to benefit the endangered fish
- \$ **Habitat Development B** Restoring floodplain/wetland habitats and constructing fish passageways around dams and other barriers in the river
- \$ **Raising and Stocking Endangered Fish B** Operating hatcheries to raise endangered fish and return them to their native river habitat
- \$ **Nonnative Fish Management B** Managing nonnative fish species to limit encounters with endangered fish
- \$ **Research, Monitoring and Data Management B** Collecting data to measure the effectiveness of recovery efforts

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FAST FACTS

Bonytail (*Gila elegans*)



ã Joseph R. Tomelleri

Distinguishing Features:

- Dark gray or olive colored back, silver sides and white belly
- Small head, large fins, streamlined body that becomes pencil-thin before the tail
- Generally 16 to 18 inches long but have been known to reach 22 inches

Specifics:

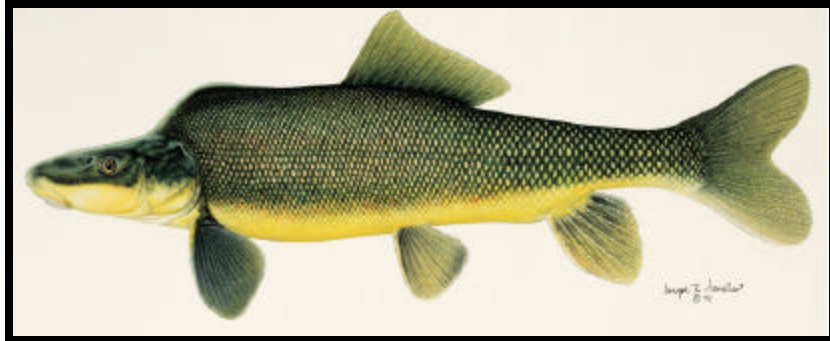
- Thought to have evolved 3 to 5 million years ago
- Have been known to live nearly 50 years
- Capable of spawning at an age of 5 to 7 years; spawns in spring and early summer
- Feeds on insects and plant matter
- Natural habitat is thought to be in large rivers of the Colorado River Basin particularly canyon bound reaches

Status:

- Given full protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1980; listed as endangered
- Endangered under Colorado law as of 1976
- Listed as protected under Utah law as of 1974
- Rarest of the four endangered fish
- No known reproducing populations in the wild
- Populations are being reintroduced through stocking in the Colorado, Green and Yampa rivers

FAST FACTS

Razorback sucker (*Xyrauchen texanus*)



ã Joseph R. Tomelleri

Distinguishing Features:

- Brownish-green upper body with a yellow to white colored belly
- Abrupt, sharp edged hump on back behind head
- Fleshy lips used for sucking up food
- Generally 16 to 28 inches long weighing less than 7 pounds but have been known to reach 36 inches and 13 pounds

Specifics:

- Now limited to 25% of historic range
- Thought to have evolved 3 million years ago
- Have been known to live 40 years or more
- Capable of spawning at an age of 3 to 4 years; spawns in spring
- Feeds primarily on insects, plankton, and plant matter
- Natural habitat is in the Colorado River Basin
- Valued as food by early settlers and miners of the Colorado River Basin
- Hump is believed to provide stability in turbulent flow

Status:

- Given full protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1991; listed as endangered
- Endangered under Colorado law as of 1979
- Listed as protected under Utah law as of 1973
- Existing population comprised primarily of adult fish because few young survive
- Populations are being reintroduced in the Colorado, Gunnison, Green and San Juan rivers

FAST FACTS

Humpback chub (*Gila cypha*)



ã Joseph R. Tomelleri

Distinguishing Features:

- Gray or olive colored back, silver sides and white belly
- Spawning adults are tinged with rosy-red gill coverings and fins
- Long snout that protrudes over the lower jaw; prominent hump on back behind head; large, streamlined fins
- Generally 14 to 16 inches long but have been known to reach 20 inches

Specifics:

- Thought to have evolved 3 to 5 million years ago
- Have been known to live nearly 30 years
- Capable of spawning at an age of 2 to 3 years; spawns in spring and early summer
- Feeds primarily on insects, plankton, and plant matter
- Natural habitat is in canyon bound reaches of the Colorado River Basin

Status:

- Listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as of 1964
- Given full protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1973
- Endangered under Colorado law as of 1976
- Listed as protected under Utah law as of 1973
- 6 known existing populations
- Populations appear stable but small

FAST FACTS

Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*)



ã Joseph R. Tomelleri

Distinguishing Features:

- Olive-green and gold back, silvery-white belly
- Generally grow 18 to 22 inches long weighing 2 to 4 pounds but have been historically known to reach up to 6 feet and 80 pounds or more. Fish larger than three feet are common
- Torpedo shaped body, upper jaw extends to or beyond the middle of the eye

Specifics:

- Range currently limited to the upper Colorado River Basin
- Largest species of minnow native to North America
- Thought to have evolved 3 to 5 million years ago
- Have been known to live 40 years
- Capable of spawning at an age of 5 to 6 years; spawns in late spring and summer
- Known to migrate more than 200 miles to spawn
- Young feed primarily on insects; adults feed mainly on other fish
- Natural habitat is in the Colorado River Basin
- Valued as food by early settlers and miners of the Colorado River Basin
- Known as the "white salmon" or "Colorado salmon" by settlers

Status:

- Listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as of 1967
- Given full protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1973
- Listed as endangered under Colorado law in 1976; downlisted to threatened in 1998
- Listed as protected under Utah law as of 1973
- Populations are reproducing in the wild in the Green and Colorado rivers
- Populations are stable and increasing in the Green and Colorado rivers
- Small population present in the San Juan River Basin